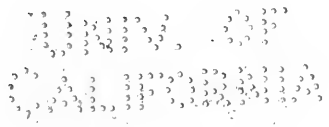
BL
1480
W3
MAIN

UC-NRLF
B 3 937 987

# ZEN BUDDHISM
## and Its Relation to Art



By
ARTHUR WALEY

LONDON:
LUZAC & CO., 46, Great Russell Street, W.C.1.
1922

# ZEN BUDDHISM

# ZEN BUDDHISM
## and Its Relation to Art

By
ARTHUR WALEY

LONDON
LUZAC & CO., 46, Great Russell Street, W.C.1.
1922

# ZEN BUDDHISM
## AND ITS RELATION TO ART

Books on the Far East often mention a sect of Buddhism called Zen. They say that it was a "school of abstract meditation" and that it exercised a profound influence upon art and literature; but they tell us very little about what Zen actually was, about its relation to ordinary Buddhism, its history, or the exact nature of its influence upon the arts.

The reason of this is that very little of the native literature which deals with Zen has yet been translated, perhaps because it is written in early Chinese colloquial, a language the study of which has been almost wholly neglected by Europeans and also (to judge by some of their attempts to translate it) by the Japanese themselves.

The present paper makes no attempt at profundity, but it is based on the study of original texts and furnishes, I hope, some information not hitherto accessible.

---

Before describing the origins of Zen itself I must give some general account of Buddhism. At the time when it reached China[1] there were two kinds of Buddhism, called the Lesser Vehicle and the Greater. The former, Primitive Buddhism, possessed scriptures which in part at any rate were genuine; that is to say, they recorded words actually used by Shākyamuni. The ordinary adherent of this religion did not hope to become a Buddha; Buddhas indeed were regarded as extremely rare. He only aspired to become an Arhat, that is "an ascetic ripe for annihilation," one who is about to escape from the wheel of reincarnation—whose present incarnation is an antechamber to Nirvāna. To such aspirants the Buddha gives no assistance; he is what children in their games call "home," and his followers must pant after him as best they can.

Those who found this religion too comfortless invented another, which became known as Mahāyāna, the Greater Vehicle. Putting their doctrines into the mouth of Shākya-

(1) First century A.D.

muni, they fabricated *ad hoc* sermons of enormous length, preached (so they asserted) by the Buddha himself in his "second period" to those who were ripe to receive the whole truth.

The great feature of this new Buddhism was the intervention of the merciful Bodhisattvas, *illuminati* who, though fit for Buddhahood, voluntarily renounced it in order to help mankind.

The first Buddhist books to reach China emanated from the Lesser Vehicle. But the Greater Vehicle or Bodhisattva-Buddhism soon prevailed, and by the sixth century A.D. over two thousand works, most of them belonging to the Greater Vehicle, had been translated into Chinese.

## BUDDHIST SECTS.

There were already many sects in China, the chief of which were :

(1) *The Amidists.*

This was the form of Buddhism which appealed to the uneducated. It taught that a Buddha named Amida presides over the Western Paradise, where he will receive the souls of those that worship him. The conception of this Paradise closely resembles the Christian idea of Heaven and may have been derived from it.

(2) The *Tendai* Sect, founded at the end of the sixth century. Its teaching was based on a scripture of enormous length called the *Saddharma Pundarīka Sūtra*, which is translated by Kern in the Sacred Books of the East. It was perhaps the broadest and most representative sect. It laid great stress on the ethical side of Buddhism.

We now come to *Zen.*

In the year 520 A.D. there arrived at Canton a missionary from Southern India. His name was Bodhidharma and he appears to have been the younger son of an Indian Prince.

The reigning Emperor of China was a munificent patron of Buddhism. He had built monasteries, given alms, distributed scriptures, defended the faith. Hearing that a Buddhist prince had arrived from India he summoned him at once to his

Capital. The following conversation took place in the Palace at Nanking:

*Emperor:* You will be interested to hear that I have built many monasteries, distributed scriptures, given alms, and upheld the Faith. Have I not indeed acquired merit?

*Bodhidharma:* None at all.

*Emperor:* In what then does true merit consist?

*Bodhidharma:* In the obliteration of Matter through Absolute Knowledge, not by external acts.

*Emperor:* Which is the Divine and Primal Aspect of Reality?

*Bodhidharma:* Reality has no aspect that is divine.

*Emperor:* What are you, who have come before my Throne?

*Bodhidharma:* I do not know.

The Emperor could make nothing of him. Monasticism, a huge vested interest, decried him, and after a short stay in Nanking he started northward, towards the Capital of the Wei Tartars, who then ruled over a large part of China. The Wei Emperor, like his Chinese confrère, was also a great patron of Buddhism, and he, too, desired an interview with the Indian priest. But Bodhidharma had done with Emperors, and settled in a small country temple, where he lived till his death nine years later. Some say that he tried to visit the Capital of the Weis, but was prevented by the intrigues of the monks there.

He left behind him a few short tractates, the substance of which is as follows:

There is no such person as Buddha. Buddha is simply a Sanskrit word meaning "initiate." The Absolute is immanent in every man's heart. This "treasure of the heart" is the only Buddha that exists. It is no use seeking Buddha outside your own nature. Prayer, scripture-reading, fasting, the observance of monastic rules—all are useless. Those who seek Buddha do not find him. You may know by heart all the Sūtras of the twelve divisions, and yet be unable to escape from the Wheel of Life and Death. One thing alone

avails—to discover the unreality of the World by contemplating the Absolute which is at the root of one's own nature.

Some one asked him: "Why may we not worship the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas?" He answered:

"Ogres and hobgoblins can at will assume the outward form of Bodhisattvas; such are heretical and not of the true Buddha. There is no Buddha but your own thoughts. Buddha is the Way. The Way is Zen. This word Zen cannot be understood even of the wise. Zen means 'for a man to behold his fundamental nature.'"[1]

---

The highest truths cannot be written down or taught by speech. A man who cannot write a word, can yet contemplate his own heart and become wise. Knowledge of 1,000 Sūtras and 10,000 Shāstras cannot help him to realise the Absolute within him.

He was asked: "Can a layman with wife and children, one given over to the lusts of the flesh, achieve Buddhahood?" He answered:

"Provided he contemplate his own inner-nature, he will achieve Buddhahood. It does not matter about his lusts. Even a butcher can achieve Buddhahood, if he searches in his own heart."

"What," cried his listeners, "a butcher, who lives by taking life, and *he* achieve Buddhahood?" The master replied:

"It is not a question of the man's trade. If he has learnt to know his own nature he will be saved.

"I have come from India only to teach you that Buddha is Thought. I care nothing for monastic rules or ascetic practices. As for walking on water or through fire, climbing sword-wheels, fasting, sitting upright for hours without rest—all such practices are heretical; they belong to the World of Being.

"Thought, Thought, Thought! It is hard to seek. Expanding, it covers the whole world; shrinking, it is too small to lodge a pin.

"I seek the heart; I do not seek Buddha. For I have

(1) Zen *(Sanskrit: dhyāna)* means literally "contemplation."

learnt to know that the outer world is empty and untenanted."

Such was the teaching of Bodhidharma. It was Vedantic[2] rather than Buddhist. The terms "thought," "Buddha," etc., used by Bodhidharma correspond exactly to the *brahman* of the Upanishads. Mystic contemplation or *yoga* had been used by the Brahmins and was not unknown to the early Buddhists. But Bodhidharma was the first to insist upon it as the sole means of salvation.

Yet though his whole teaching turned on this "meditation" or "Zen," he left behind him no exact directions for the practice of it. Having shown the end, he left it to each individual to find his own means. Rules, dogmas and definitions were precisely what he set out to destroy.

Less than a hundred years after his death another Indian, Buddhapriya, came to China and there defined with exactitude and blunt materiality the various forms of meditation.

The transition from the spirituality of Bodhidharma to the grossness of his follower is, however, typical of religious history. The poetry of Christ turns into the theology of Paul; the hovel of Saint Francis into the mansion of Brother Elias.

## BUDDHAPRIYA.

He first describes the different attitudes in which Zen may be practised, with an exact account of the correct position for hands, feet, head, etc. The normal attitude of meditation, cross-legged, with upright back and hands locked over the knees is familiar to every one.

Zen could also be practised while walking and, in cases of sickness, while lying down. Buddhapriya's instructions are in the form of question and answer.

*Question.*—How does the Zen practised by heretics and by the other schools of Buddhism differ from our Zen?

*Answer.*—The Zen of the heretics is not impersonal. The Zen of the Lesser Vehicle is material. The Zen

(2) Dr. McGovern tells me that Zen would seem to be more immediately derived from the Nihilistic School of Nāgārjuna (1st century A.D.).

of the Greater Vehicle only abstracts man and phenomena.

*Question.*—How ought one to set about practising Zen?

*Answer.*—First put far away from you all anger and malice, and fill your heart with kindness and compassion.

*Question.*—Can the beginner at once proceed to the contemplation of non-Being?

*Answer.*—By no means! He must by stratagems gradually enter in. I have never yet seen one who straightway achieved the vision of non-Reality. If for example he were meditating in this room he must first banish from his mind every part of the world except the city of Ch'ang-an. Next every building in the city except this monastery. Next, every room in the monastery except this cell, every object but himself, every part of himself except the end of his nose. Finally the end of his nose hangs in space like a drop of dew and on this nose-end he concentrates his mind.

This is only a preliminary exercise. There are others of the same kind. For example—persuade yourself that your navel is a minute rivulet running through the sands. When this conception is firmly achieved, you will see a bright light and ultimately, the body growing transparent, you will behold the working of your bowels.

Or again, regard your head as the top of a hollow pipe which runs straight down through your body into the earth. Meditate upon the top of your head, that is to say, upon the mouth of the drain-pipe, and then gradually ascend in your thoughts to a height of four inches above the head, and concentrate firmly on this conception. You will thus easily pass into the contemplation of non-Being, having performed the transition from elementary to complete Zen as comfortably as a workman climbs the rungs of a ladder.

*Question.*—Are there any signs whereby I may know that I have attained to Samādhi?[1]

(1) Concentration.

*Answer.*—To be sure there are. Sometimes you will feel a sensation as of bugs or ants creeping over your skin; or again, it will appear to you that a cloud or mass of white cotton-wool is rising immediately behind your back. In neither case must you be discomposed or put out your hand. Sometimes it will seem as though oil were dripping down from your head and face; sometimes a light will shine from out of the ground you are sitting upon.

These are all preliminary signs.

Sometimes when you have been sitting for a long while and your back is aching, you will suddenly hear a sound of rapping with the fingers or a noise as of some one bumping against the door. Do not be disquieted. These are the Good Spirits of Heaven, come to warn you against sleep.

Again, it may happen that you have an agreeable sense of lightness and floating; this is a good sign. Beware, however, of a *painful* sense of lightness; for this may merely indicate flatulence.

Patches of heat on the body are a sign of Fiery Samādhi. A light filling the whole room is a premonitory sign of Zen; to smell strange fragrances not known on earth is a sign of whole and utter Abstraction.

Such and many more are the signs of Zen. The practicant must not heed them; for if by them he be encouraged or dismayed, all his work will be undone.

*Question.*—Can Zen be practised in a Buddha Shrine?

*Answer.*—No, indeed! Zen should be practised in a quiet room or under a tree or among tombs or sitting on the dewy earth.

*Question.*—Can Zen be practised by many sitting together?

*Answer.*—To be sure it may; but each must face his neighbour's back. They must not sit face to face. When there are many sitting together at night, a lamp or candle may be lit; but when there are few together, it ought not to be used.

*Question.*—Need I wear monastic vestments at my meditations?

*Answer.*—Vestments? Why, you need wear no clothes at all, if so be you are alone.

## LATER DEVELOPMENT OF ZEN.

Zen was at first a purely personal discipline, non-monastic, non-ethical, not demanding the acceptance of any Scripture or any tradition. In modern Japan it has to some extent regained this character. In China the habit of quoting written authority was too strong to be easily discarded. The Zen masters soon began to answer difficult questions by quoting from the Buddhist Scriptures. Convenience dictated that practicants of Zen should live in communities and monasticism was soon established in their sect, as in every other sect of Buddhism. Questions of conduct arose, and Zen was squared with the contemporary ethical outlook; though in medieval Japanese literature wicked and cynical persons are generally depicted as adepts of Zen.

Bodhidharma denied the existence of Good and Evil; but it was pointed out by later apologists that the Zen adept, having viewed the Absolute, is convinced of the unreality and futility of those pleasures and possessions which are the incentive to sin. The Zen practicant, though he makes no moral effort, nevertheless is certain not to sin, because he is certain not to be tempted.

Finally, Zen forged itself a tradition. Probably during the eleventh century a Scripture[1] was fabricated which recounts how once when Buddha was preaching, he plucked a flower and smiled. Only the disciple Kāshyapa understood the significance of this act. Between him and the Buddha there passed a wordless communication of Absolute Truths. This communication was silently passed on by Kāshyapa to his disciple, and so ultimately to Bodhidharma, who brought it to China.

The method of teaching by symbolic acts (such as the plucking of a flower) was extensively used by the Zen masters. For example, when a disciple asked Enkwan a question about

(1) *Dai Bonten Monbutsu Ketsugi Kyō.*

the nature of Buddha, he answered, "Bring me a clean bowl." When the priest brought the bowl, the master said, "Now put it back where you found it." He signified that the priest's questionings must return to their proper place, the questioner's heart, from which alone spiritual knowledge can be obtained.

The object of the Zen teachers, as of some eccentric schoolmasters whom I have known, seems at first sight to have been merely to puzzle and surprise their pupils to the highest possible degree. A peculiar "brusquerie" was developed in Zen monasteries. The literature of the sect consists chiefly in an endless series of anecdotes recording the minutest happenings in the lives of famous Zen monks and their (apparently) most trivial sayings. But behind these trifling acts and sayings a deep meaning lay hid. The interpretation of such teaching depends on a complete knowledge of the symbolism used. I am not inclined to agree with those students of Zen who assert that its written teaching are wholly devoid of intellectual content or so completely esoteric as not to admit of explanation in words. Like other Buddhist philosophers the Zen masters were chiefly concerned with the attempt to define the relation between the One and the Many, between the subjective and objective aspects of life.

The idealism of Zen does not mean that the phenomenal world has no importance. To those who have not reached complete self-realisation the urgencies of that world remain paramount and are the only stepping-stones upon which he can climb higher.

On the day of his arrival at the monastery a novice presented himself before the abbot, begging to be allowed to begin his spiritual exercises without further delay. "Have you had supper?" asked the abbot. "Yes." "Then go and wash your plate."

## THE ZEN MASTERS.

Let us begin with Enō, a master of the seventh century. He lost his parents when he was young and earned his living by gathering firewood. One day when he was in the marketplace he heard some one reading the Diamond Sūtra.[1] He

(1) Translated by W. Gemmell, 1912. Its use by Kōnin shows that Zen did not long avoid the use of scriptures.

asked where such books were to be had and was told "From Master Kōnin on the Yellow Plum-blossom Hill." Accordingly he went to Kōnin's Monastery in Anhui and presented himself before the Master. "Where do you come from?" "From the South." "Bah! In the South they have not Buddha in their souls." "North and South," replied Enō, "are human distinctions that Buddha knows nothing of."

Kōnin accepted him as a lay-brother and put him to pound rice in the bakery.

Kōnin was growing old and wished to choose his successor. He therefore instituted a poetical competition in which each monk was to epitomise in a quatrain the essence of Zen. The favourite candidate was the warden Shinshū, who sent in the following verses:

*The body is the trunk of the Bodhi-tree;*
*The mind is the bright mirror's stand;*
*Scrub your mirror continually,*
*Lest the dust eclipse its brightness.*

Enō, as a lay-brother, was not qualified to compete. Some one told him of Shinshū's quatrain. "Mine would be very different," he exclaimed, and persuaded one of the boys employed in the bakery to go stealthily by night and inscribe the following poem on the monastery-wall:

*Knowledge is not a tree;*
*The Mirror has no stand;*
*Since nothing exists,*
*How could dust rise and cover it?*

The authorship of the poem was discovered and the abbot Kōnin visited Enō in the bakery. "Is your rice white or no?" he asked. "White?" answered Enō; "it has not yet been sifted." Thereupon the abbot struck three times on the rice-mortar with his staff and departed. Enō understood his meaning. That night at the third watch he came to Kōnin's cell and was invested with the abbot's mantle, thereby becoming the Sixth Patriarch of the Zen Church. He died in 712 A.D., without having learned how to read or write.

## FASHIONABLE ZEN.

The warden Shinshū had lost the Patriarchate and with it the spiritual headship of Zen. But as a compensation Fate

had in store for him worldly triumphs of the most dazzling kind. Leaving the rural monastery of Kōnin, he entered the Temple of the Jade fountain in the great city of Kingchau. His fame soon spread over central China. He was a man of "huge stature, bushy eyebrows and shapely ears." The Empress Wu Hou, who had usurped the throne of China, notoriously cultivated the society of handsome priests. About 684 A.D. she summoned him to the Capital. Instead of commanding his presence at Court she came in a litter to his lodgings and actually knelt down before him. The friendship of this murderous and fiendishly cruel woman procured for him temporal dignities which in the eyes of the world completely outshone the rustic piety of the Sixth Patriarch. Shinshū at the Capital became as it were the Temporal Father of Zen, while Enō at his country monastery remained its spiritual pope. The successors of Enō became known as the Fathers of the Southern School; while the courtly and social Zen of Shinshū is called Zen of the North.

Was it in sincere goodwill or with the desire to discredit his rival that Shinshū invited Enō to join him at the Capital? In any case Enō had the good sense to refuse. "I am a man of low stature and humble appearance," he replied; "I fear that the men of the North would despise me and my doctrines" —thus hinting (with just that touch of malice which so often spices the unworldly) that Shinshū's pre-eminence in the North was due to outward rather than to spiritual graces.

Shinshū died in 706, outliving his august patroness by a year. To perpetuate his name a palace was turned into a memorial monastery; the Emperor's brother wrote his epitaph; his obsequies were celebrated with stupendous pomp.

His successor, Fujaku, at first remained at the Kingchau monastery where he had been Shinshū's pupil. But in 724 the irresolute Emperor Ming-huang, who had proscribed Buddhism ten years before, summoned Fujaku to the Imperial City. Here princes and grandees vied with one another in doing him honour. "The secret of his success," says the historian,[1] "was that he seldom spoke and generally looked cross. Hence his rare words and occasional smiles acquired in the eyes of his

(1) *Old T'ang History*, 191.

admirers an unmerited value." He died at the age of 89. On the day of his interment the great streets of Ch'ang-an were empty. The whole city had joined in the funeral procession. The Governor of Honan (one of the greatest functionaries in the State), together with his wife and children, all of them clad in monastic vestments, followed the bier, mingling with the promiscuous crowd of his admirers and disciples.

Religion was at that time fashionable in the high society of Ch'ang-an, as it is to-day in the great Catholic capitals of Munich, Vienna or Seville. When I read of Fujaku's burial another scene at once sprang into my mind, the funeral of a great Bavarian dignitary, where I saw the noblemen of Munich walk hooded and barefoot through the streets.

I shall not refer again to the Northern School of Zen. One wonders whether the founders of religions are forced by fate to watch the posthumous development of their creeds. If so, theirs must be the very blackest pit of Hell.

Let us return to the Southern School, always regarded as the true repository of Zen tradition.

## ŌBAKU.

Ōbaku lived at the beginning of the ninth century, and was thus a contemporary of the poet Po Chü-i. He enjoyed the patronage of a distinguished statesman the Chancellor Hai Kyū, of whom the Emperor said, "This is indeed a true Confucian." It is to the Chancellor that we owe the record of Ōbaku's conversations, which he wrote down day by day. I will make a few extracts from this diary:

Hai Kyū.—Enō could not read or write. How came it that he succeeded to the Patriarchate of Kōnin? The warden Shinshū was in control of 500 monks, gave lectures, and could discourse upon thirty-two different Sūtras and Shāstras. It was certainly very strange that he was not made Patriarch.

Ōbaku (replying).—Shinshū's conception of Thought was too material. His proofs and practices were too positive.

"The master told me that when he was studying with Enkwan, the Emperor Tai Chung came dressed as a monk.

The master happened to be in the chapel prostrating himself before an image of Buddha. The Emperor, who thought he had learnt the lesson of Zen idealism, said to him: 'There is nothing to be got from Buddha, nothing from the Church, nothing from Man; for nothing exists. What do you mean by praying at your age?'

"Ōbaku answered him: 'I seek nothing of Buddha, the Church, or of Man. I am in the habit of praying.' The Emperor said: 'What do you do it for?' Ōbaku lost patience and struck him with his fist. 'You rude fellow,' cried the Emperor. 'Since nothing exists, what difference does it make to you whether I am rude or polite?' and Ōbaku struck him again. The Emperor retreated hastily."

In his old age Ōbaku visited his native village and stayed a year in his mother's house, without revealing his identity. After he had set out again for his monastery, his mother suddenly realised that he was her son and went in pursuit of him. She reached the shore of a certain river, only to see him disembarking on the other side. Thereupon she lost her reason and flung herself into the water.

Ōbaku threw a lighted torch after her and recited the following verses:

*May the wide river dry at its source, to its very bed*
*If here the crime of matricide has been done;*
*When one son becomes a priest, the whole family is born again in Heaven;*
*If that is a lie, all that Buddha promised is a lie.*

Henceforward the throwing of a lighted torch into the bier became part of the Zen funeral ceremony; it was accompanied by the reciting of the above verses. Probably formula, ritual, and story alike belong to a period much more ancient than Buddhism.

In the seventeenth century a Chinese priest named Ingen[1] carried the teaching of Ōbaku to Japan, where it now possesses nearly 700 temples.

(1) 1592-1673 A.D.

BASO.

Baso was a master of the ninth century. One day he was sitting with his feet across the garden-path. A monk came along with a wheel-barrow. "Tuck in your feet," said the monk. "What has been extended cannot be retracted," answered Baso. "What has been started cannot be stopped," cried the monk and pushed the barrow over Baso's feet. The master hobbled to the monastery and seizing an axe called out "Have any of you seen the rascal who hurt my feet?" The monk who had pushed the barrow then came out and stood "with craned head." The master laid down his axe.

To understand this story we must realise that the wheel-barrow is here a symbol of the Wheel of Life and Death, which, though every spoke of it is illusion, cannot be disregarded till we have destroyed the last seed of phenomenal perception in us.

RINZAI.

Ōbaku, as we have seen, taught wisdom with his fists. When the novice Rinzai came to him and asked him what was the fundamental idea of Buddhism, Ōbaku hit him three times with his stick. Rinzai fled and presently met the monk Daigu.

*Daigu:* Where do you come from?

*Rinzai:* From Ōbaku.

*Daigu:* And what stanza did he lecture upon?

*Rinzai:* I asked him thrice what was the fundamental doctrine of Buddhism and each time he hit me with his stick. Please tell me if I did something I ought not to have done?

*Daigu:* You go to Ōbaku and torture him by your questions, and then ask if you have done wrong!

At that moment Rinzai had a Great Enlightenment.

Rinzai substituted howling for Ōbaku's manual violence. He shouted meaningless syllables at his disciples; roared like a lion or bellowed like a bull. This "howling" became a regular part of Zen practice, and may be compared to the yelling of the American Shakers. Upon his deathbed Rinzai summoned his disciples round him and asked which of them felt

capable of carrying on his work. Sanshō volunteered to do so. "How will you tell people what was Rinzai's teaching?" asked Rinzai. Sanshō threw out his chest and roared in a manner which he thought would gratify the master. But Rinzai groaned and cried out, "To think that such a blind donkey should undertake to hand on my teaching!"

It was in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that Zen most completely permeated Chinese thought. Upon the invasion of the Mongols[1] many Zen monks from Eastern China took refuge in Japan; the same thing happened during the Manchu invasion in the seventeenth century. But by that time Zen had a serious philosophic rival.

In the fifteenth century the philosopher Wang Yang-ming began to propagate a doctrine which, in all but names, strongly resembled the philosophic side of Zen. He taught that in each one of us is a "higher nature," something which, borrowing a phrase from Mencius, he called "Good Knowledge." Of this inner nature he speaks in exactly the same terms as the Zen teachers spoke of their "Buddha immanent in man's heart." He even uses the same kind of doggerel-verse as a medium of teaching.

Rigid Confucianists, who would not have listened to any doctrine of professedly Buddhist origin, were able through Wang Yang-ming's tact to accept the philosophy of Zen without feeling that they were betraying the Confucian tradition. The followers of Yang-ming are to-day very numerous both in China and Japan. They cultivate introspection, but not the complete self-hypnosis of Zen.

In China, where Zen is almost forgotten, the followers of this later doctrine are not even aware of its derivation.

## ZEN AND ART.

I said at the beginning of this paper that Zen is often mentioned by writers on Far Eastern Art. The connection between Zen and art is important, not only because of the inspiration which Zen gave to the artist, but also because through Zen was obtained a better understanding of the psycho-

(1) On the attitude of the Mongol rulers to Zen, see an article by Prof. Kunishita, *Tōyōgakuhō*, xi., 4, 87.

logical conditions under which art is produced than has prevailed in any other civilisation.

Art was regarded as a kind of Zen, as a delving down into the Buddha that each of us unknowingly carries within him, as Benjamin carried Joseph's cup in his sack. Through Zen we annihilate Time and see the Universe not split up into myriad fragments, but in its primal unity. Unless, says the Zen æsthetician, the artist's work is imbued with this vision of the subjective, non-phenomenal aspect of life, his productions will be mere toys.

I do not mean to suggest that Chinese artists found in Zen a short cut to the production of beauty. Zen aims at the annihilation of consciousness, whereas art is produced by an interaction of conscious and unconscious faculties. How far such an interaction can be promoted by the psychic discipline of Zen no layman can judge; moreover the whole question of the artist's psychology is controversial and obscure.

Perhaps it is not even very important that the artist himself should have a sound æsthetic; but it is of the utmost importance to the artist that the public should have some notion of the conditions under which art can be produced—should have some key to the vagaries of a section of humanity which will in any case always be found troublesome and irritating.

Such a key Zen supplied, and it is in the language of Zen that, after the twelfth century, art is usually discussed in China and Japan.

## THE ROKUTSŪJI SCHOOL.

One institution, about which till recently very little was known, seems to have been an important factor in the propagation of Zen art and ideas. About 1215 A.D. a Zen priest came from the far south-west of China to Hangchow, the Capital, and there refounded a ruined monastery, the Rokutsūji, which stood on the shores of the famous Western Lake. His name was Mokkei. He seems to have been the first to practise the swift, ecstatic type of monochrome which is associated with Zen. In hurried swirls of ink he sought to record before they faded visions and exaltations produced whether by the frenzy of wine, the stupor of tea, or the vacancy of absorption.

Sometimes his design is tangled and chaotic; sometimes as in his famous "Persimmons,"[1] passion has congealed into a stupendous calm.

Of his fellow-workers the best known is Rasō, a painter of birds and flowers. Ryōkai, once a fashionable painter, left the Court and with his pupil Rikaku worked in the manner of Mokkei.

Examples of Ryōkai's work before and after his conversion are still preserved in Japan.

Finally, about the middle of the fourteenth century, a Japanese priest came to China and, under circumstances which I shall describe in an appendix, confusingly became Mokkei II. It may be that it was he who sent back to his own country some of the numerous pictures signed Mokkei which are now in Japan. Which of them are by Mokkei and which by Mokuan is a problem which remains to be solved.

This Zen art did not flourish long in China, nor in all probability do many specimens of it survive there. But in Japan it was a principal source of inspiration to the great painters of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Sesshū himself is the direct descendant of Mokkei; as in a decadent way are Kanō masters such as Tsunenobu.

Zen paintings are of two kinds. (1) Representations of animals, birds and flowers, in which the artist attempted to identify himself with the object depicted, to externise its inner Buddha. These were achieved not by study from the life, as the early Sung nature-pieces have been, but by intense and concentrated visualisation of the subject to be painted. This mental picture was rapidly transferred to paper before the spell of concentration (samādhi) was broken. (2) Illustrations of episodes in the lives of the great Zen teachers. This branch of Zen art was essentially dramatic. It sought to express the characters of the persons involved, subtly to reveal the grandeur of soul that lay hidden behind apparent uncouthness or stupidity. Typical of this kind of painting are the pictures of "Tanka burning the Image."

One night Tanka, a Zen priest, stayed as a guest at an ordinary Buddhist monastery. There was no firewood in his cell.

(1) See Kümmel, *Die Kunst Ostasiens* Pl. 118.

As the night was cold he went into the chapel, seized a wooden statue of Shākyamuni and, chopping it up, made himself a comfortable fire. To him the idol of Buddha was a mere block of wood; his indignant hosts took a different view. The controversy is the same as that which occupies the central place in the Nō play *Sotoba Komachi.*

There is another aspect of Zen which had an equally important effect on art. The Buddha-nature is immanent not in Man only, but in everything that exists, animate or inanimate. Stone, river and tree are alike parts of the great hidden Unity. Thus Man, through his Buddha-nature or universalised consciousness, possesses an intimate means of contact with Nature. The songs of birds, the noise of waterfalls, the rolling of thunder, the whispering of wind in the pine-trees—all these are utterances of the Absolute.

Hence the connection of Zen with the passionate love of Nature which is so evident in Far Eastern poetry and art.

Personally I believe that this passion for Nature worked more favourably on literature than on painting. The typical Zen picture, dashed off in a moment of exaltation—perhaps a moonlit river expressed in three blurs and a flourish—belongs rather to the art of calligraphy than to that of painting.

In his more elaborate depictions of nature the Zen artist is led by his love of nature into that common pitfall of lovers—sentimentality. The forms of Nature tend with him to function not as forms but as symbols.

Something resembling the mystic belief which Zen embraces is found in many countries and under many names. But Zen differs from other religions of the same kind in that it admits only one means by which the perception of Truth can be attained. Prayer, fasting, asceticism—all are dismissed as useless, giving place to one single resource, the method of self-hypnosis which I have here described.

I have, indeed, omitted any mention of an important adjunct of Zen, namely tea-drinking, which was as constant a feature in the life of Zen monasteries as it is here in the régime of charwomen and girl-clerks. I have not space to describe the various tea-ceremonies. The tendency of monasteries was to create in them as in every part of daily life a more and more

elaborate ritual, calculated to give some pattern to days otherwise devoid of any incident. We possess minute descriptions of every ceremony—the initiation of novices, the celebration of birth and death anniversaries of the Patriarchs, the procedure in cases of sickness, madness, disobedience, disappearance or death of monks; the selection and investiture of abbots; the lectures, liturgies and sessions which constituted the curriculum of Zen instruction.

In China decay set in after the fifteenth century. The Zen monasteries became almost indistinguishable from those of popular, idolatrous Buddhism. In Japan, on the other hand, Zen has remained absolutely distinct and is now the favourite creed of the educated classes. It has not hitherto conducted any propaganda in Europe, whereas the Amida Sect has sent out both missionaries and pamphlets. But I believe that Zen would find many converts in England. Something rather near it we already possess. Quakerism, like Zen, is a non-dogmatic religion, laying stress on the doctrine of Immanence. But whereas the Quakers seek communion with the Divine Spark in corporate meditation and deliberately exploit the mysterious potencies of crowd-psychology—the Zen adept probes in solitude (or at least without reference to his neighbour) for the Buddha within him.

In cases where a Quaker meeting passes in silence, the members having meditated quietly for a whole hour, a very near approach to a Zen gathering has been made. But more often than not the Holy Spirit, choosing his mouthpiece with an apparent lack of discrimination, quickly descends upon some member of the meeting. The ineffable, which Zen wisely refused to express, is then drowned in a torrent of pedestrian oration.

Some, then, may turn to Zen as a purer Quakerism. Others will be attracted to it by the resemblance of its doctrines to the hypotheses of recent psychology. The Buddha consciousness of Zen exactly corresponds to the Universal Consciousness which, according to certain modern investigators, lies hid beneath the personal Consciousness. Such converts will probably use a kind of applied Zen, much as the Japanese have done; that is to say, they will not seek to spend their days in

complete Samādhi, but will dive occasionally, for rest or encouragement, into the deeper recesses of the soul.

It is not likely that they will rest content with the traditional Eastern methods of self-hypnosis. If certain states of consciousness are indeed more valuable than those with which we are familiar in ordinary life—then we must seek them unflinchingly by whatever means we can devise. I can imagine a kind of dentist's chair fitted with revolving mirrors, flashing lights, sulphurous haloes expanding and contracting—in short a mechanism that by the pressure of a single knob should whirl a dustman into Nirvāna.

Whether such states of mind are actually more valuable than our ordinary consciousness is difficult to determine. Certainly no one has much right to an opinion who has not experienced them. But something akin to Samādhi—a sudden feeling of contact with a unity more real than the apparent complexity of things—is probably not an uncommon experience. The athlete, the creative artist, the lover, the philosopher—all, I fancy, get a share of it, not when seeking to escape from the visible world; but rather just when that world was seeming to them most sublimely real.

To seek by contemplation of the navel or of the tip of the nose a repetition of spiritual experiences such as these seems to us inane; and indeed the negative trance of Zen is very different from the positive ecstasies to which I have just referred. I say that it is different; but how do I know? "Zen," said Bodhidharma, "cannot be described in words nor chronicled in books"; and I have no other experience of Zen. If I *knew*, I might transmit to you my knowledge, but it would have to be by a direct spiritual communication, symbolised only by a smile, a gesture, or the plucking of a flower.

I need not therefore apologise for having given a purely external and historical account of Zen, a creed whose inner mysteries are admittedly beyond the scope of words.

## APPENDIX I.

Reproductions of Zen Paintings in Japanese art publications. (The *Kokka* and the other publications here referred to may be seen at the Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum; and at the Print Room of the British Museum.)

MOKKEI.—*Kokka.* 37, 112, 122, 177, 185, 238, 242, 265, 268, 291, 293, 314.

RASŌ.—*Shimbi Taikwan* XX.

MOKUAN.—(Mokkei II).—*Kokka* 295, *Shimbi Taikwan* Vol. IX. (Nos. 21 and 22 in the collection of Chinese Paintings at the British Museum are probably by Mokuan.)

RYŌKAI.—*Kokka* 40, 114, 145, 152, 220, 227, 229.

RIKAKU.—*Kokka* 269.

MUJUN.—(An important thirteenth century Zen writer.) *Kokka* 243.

INDRA.—(A Hangchow priest, presumably an Indian; flourished c. 1280.) *Kokka* 35, 110, 223, 310. *Shimbi Taikwan* IX.

## APPENDIX II.

### MOKUAN.

The Nikkōshū[1], a diary by the priest Gidō, has the following entry under the year 1378 (month and day uncertain) :

To-day Donfu[2] came, and we fell to talking of Mokuan. It seems that he was once known as Ze-itsu. But on becoming a pupil of the priest Kenzan[3], he changed his name to Mokuan. Afterwards he went to China and entered the Honkakuji[4], where he became the disciple of Ryō-an[5] and was made librarian. Here he published at his own expense (lit. "selling his shoes") the *Second Collection of Sayings by Korin.*

Subsequently he lived at the Shōtenji at Soochow, and was warden there under Nanso[6], dying soon afterwards.

When he first came to China he spent some time at the Jōji Monastery at Hangchow and from there visited the Rokutsūji on the shores of the Western Lake. This monastery was inhabited by the followers of Mokkei. The abbot greeted Mokuan with a smile, saying to him : "Last night I dreamt that our founder Mokkei came back again. You must be his reincarnation" ; and he gave to Mokuan Mokkei's two seals, white and red. Henceforward he was known as Mokkei the Second.

---

(1) See my *Nō Plays of Japan* (Allen & Unwin, 1921), p. 19. The passage here translated is taken not from the current, two-chapter abridgement of Gidō's Diary, but from the *Kokuchoshū,* a miscellany by the 15th century priest Zuikei, who quoted many passages from the lost portion of the Diary. See Mr. Saga Tōshū, *Shina Gaku,* I., 1.

(2) 1314-1384.

(3) Died 1323. Both he and Donfu were Japanese priests who visited China.

(4) At Chia-hsing in Chehkiang.

(5) Entered this temple in 1334.

(6) Visited Japan; was at the Shōtenji from 1342-1345.

## APPENDIX III.

Reproductions of paintings illustrating Zen legend.

**BODHIDHARMA.**

(1) With tightly closed lips, as he appeared before the Emperor of China in 520. *Masterpieces of Sesshū*, Pl. 47.

(2) Crossing the Yangtze on a reed.
Perhaps the best example may be seen not in a reproduction, but in No. 22 of the original Chinese Paintings at the British Museum.

(3) Sitting with his face to the wall. He sat thus in silence for nine years in the Shōrin Monastery on Mount Sung. *Kokka* 333.

**EKA.**

Second Patriarch of the sect. Severed his own arm and presented it to Bodhidharma. In spite of his fanaticism (or because of it) the Founder did not at first regard him with complete confidence and recommended to him the study of the Langkāvatāra Sūtra, not considering him ripe for complete, non-dogmatic Zen.
Eka waiting waist-deep in the snow for the Founder to instruct him. Masterpieces of Sesshū, Pl. 45.

**ENŌ.**

Sixth Patriarch. See above, p 15.
*Kokka*, 289, 297.

**TOKUSAN,** died 865 A.D.

*Shimbi Taikwan*, I, 13, shows him with his famous Zen stick. He is also sometimes depicted failing to answer an old market-woman's riddle; and tearing up his commentary on the Diamond Sūtra.

**TANKA.**

A painting by Indra (*Kokka* 173) shows him burning the wooden statue of Buddha at the Erin Temple.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY.

(1) **EUROPEAN.**

The only writer who has made extracts from the works of Bodhidharma is Père Wieger, whose remarks (in his *Histoire des Croyances religieuses en Chine*, pp. 517-528) show a robust and likeable bigotry.

Of Zen literature he says: "Nombre d'in-folio remplis de réponses incohérentes, insensées. . . . Ce ne sont pas, comme on l'a supposé, des allusions à des affaires intérieures, qu'il faudrait connaître pour pouvoir comprendre. Ce sont des exclamations échappées à des abrutis, momentanément tirés de leur coma."

For the tea-ceremony in Japan see Okakura's *Book of Tea* (Foulis, 1919). The "military" Zen of Japan is well described by Nukariya Kaiten in his *The Religion of the Samurai*, 1913.

(2) **NATIVE.**

Most of this paper is derived from the section on Zen (Series II, Vol. 15, seq.) in the "Supplement to the Collection of Buddhist Scriptures," *Dai Nihon Zoku Zō Kyō*.

Much of the information with regard to the Rokutsūji School is taken from the article by Mr. Saga to which I have already referred. For the Rokutsūji ("Temple of the Six Penetrations") see *Hsien Shun Lin-an Chih* ("Topography of Hangchow, 1265-1275 A.D."), ch. 78, f. 9 recto.

I have also used Yamada's *Zenshū Jiten* (Dictionary of Zen) and the *Hekiganroku*, edited by Sōyen, 1920.

## SHORT INDEX.

(Chinese pronunciations given in brackets.)

Amida. 8.
Baso (Ma Tsu). 20.
Bodhidharma (Ta-mo). 8 *seq.*, 29.
Bodhisattvas. 8.
Buddhapriya (Chio-ai). 11.
*Dai Bonten Monbutsu-ketsugi Kyō.* 14.
Daigu (Ta-yü). 20.
Diamond Sūtra. 15.
Dhyāna, see Zen. Also 10.
Eka (Hui-k'o). 29.
Enkwan (Yen-kuan). 14.
Enō (Hui-nēng). 15, 29.
Fujaku (P'u-chi). 17.
Haikyū (P'ei Hsiu). 18.
*Hokkekyō*, see *Saddharma*, etc.
Honkakuji (Pēn-chio-ssŭ). 28.
Joji (Ching-tz'u). 28.
Kern. 8.
Kōnin (Hung-jēn). 15.
Korin (Ku-lin). 28.
Mahāyāna. 7.
Mokkei (Mu-ch'i). 22, 27.
Mujun (Wu-chun). 27.
Nanso (Nan-ch'u). 28.
Ōbaku (Huang Po). 18.
Okakura. 30.
Rasō (Lo-ch'uang). 23, 27.
Rikaku (Li Ch'üeh). 27.
Rinzai (Lin-chi). 20.
Rokutsūji (Liu-t'ung-ssŭ). 22.
Ryō-an (Liao-an). 28.
Ryōkai (Liang K'ai). 23, 27.
*Saddharma Pundarīka Sūtra.* 8.
Saga T. 28, 30.
Samādhi (San-mei). 12.
Sanshō (San-shēng). 21.

Shākyamuni. 7.
*Shina Gaku.* 28, 30.
Shinshū (Shēn-hsiu). 16.
Shōtenji (Ch'ēng-t'ien-ssŭ). 28.
Tanka (Tan-hsia). 23, 29.
Tendai (T'ien-t'ai). 8.
Tokusan (Tē-shan). 29.
Wieger. 30.
Wu Hou. 17.
Zen (Ch'an). 7, etc.

**RETURN TO the circulation desk of any University of California Library**

or to the

**NORTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY**
University of California
Richmond Field Station, Bldg. 400
1301 South 46th Street
Richmond, CA 94804-4698

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS
To renew or recharge your library materials, you may contact NRLF 4 days prior to due date at (510) 642-6233

**DUE AS STAMPED BELOW**

FEB 26 2009

DD20 12M 7-07

JAN 24 1996

MAR 09 2003

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, B.
FORM NO. DD6, 60m, 12/80 BERKELEY, CA 94720

GENERAL LIBRARY - U.C. BERKELEY

B000909030